

The final point I want to make is, among the great questions—there are five or six great questions which will determine what the world will look like 30 or 40 years from now. One of those great questions is, how will Russia and China, the two great former Communist powers, define their greatness in the next century? Will they define their greatness as we try to do, in terms of the achievements of our people, our ability to protect ourselves, and our ability to relate to other people? Or will they define—and I think that's a more modern definition, if you will—or will they define their greatness in terms of their ability to influence, if not outright dominate, the people that live around them as well as to control the political debate of people who live within their borders to a degree that I think is not helpful?

If that debate is resolved in the proper way, the 21st century is going to be a very good time for the American people. And I think when you hear all this stuff about NATO, you have to understand that there's two things going on. The Russians want to know, are we aggressive in NATO expansion or defensive, and looking at other targets like Bosnia? Then they're having to define in themselves, "Where do we want to be 25 or 30 years from now?"

And when they say things that we find offensive, I would ask the American people to understand their sensitivities. We were never invaded by Napoleon or Hitler, and they were. So they're a little sensitive about the prospects of their borders. And we're trying to work together for a better, brighter world.

I think that we're going to get there. I expect that the Helsinki meeting will be positive. But you should understand, this is a tough debate and that they have reasons in their own psyche and circumstances that make it a difficult one.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 137th news conference began at 2:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy Hennreich, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Oval Office Operations, and Bernard Rapoport, member, Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.

Statement on the National Economy *March 7, 1997*

Today we learned that the economy is continuing to generate good jobs, almost 600,000 jobs in the first 2 months of this year alone. That's good news for American workers and their families. The American economy has now created nearly 12 million new jobs since I took office. Now it's time to keep this American job engine on the move by passing a balanced budget plan that invests in education and our future.

Our 1993 economic plan has helped spur this strong job growth, while cutting the deficit by 63 percent, from \$290 billion in 1992 to \$107 billion in 1996. Now we must cut the deficit to zero while investing in our people. My budget will do just that. I look forward to working with the Congress to get the job done by passing a balanced budget plan.

Proclamation 6978—National Older Workers Employment Week, 1997 *March 7, 1997*

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

American workers age 55 and older represent one of our country's richest resources, and the value of their potential contribution to our society is immense. An estimated 70 percent of all Americans age 55 and older already actively contribute to our common good—by working, by volunteering, and by caring for sick and disabled relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Despite their qualifications, however, many of these Americans experience serious difficulty finding work if they lose a job or desire new employment. Their search for employment can become increasingly challenging as they grow older.

Our laws and government agencies can—and do—offer protections, programs, and services for older workers. The Age Discrimination Act, the Older Americans Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act all recognize the unique rights of such employees, and the Department of Labor alone